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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000762

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: MAOISTS, PARTIES STICK TO UNDERSTANDING; BLOCKADE
ENDED

REF: A. KATHMANDU 753
[1](#)B. 05 KATHMANDU 2556
[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 200

Classified By: CDA John Schlosser. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (U) On March 19, as a result of negotiations between the Parties and the Maoists in New Delhi (ref A), leaders of the seven-party alliance and the Maoists signed separate documents reiterating their commitment to the 12-point understanding (ref B). Both sides stated they would continue dialogue regarding the process of holding a constituent assembly. As a result of the new commitment, as of March 20, the Maoists lifted their transportation blockade of Kathmandu and district headquarters which began on March 14, and withdrew their threat of an indefinite nationwide strike, which was to begin April 3. In return, the seven-party alliance extended their planned April 8 demonstration to a four-day general strike, April 6-9, with a mass demonstration in Kathmandu on April 8. The government's response was muted, though many feared the government would disrupt the April 8 action as it had when the parties attempted to hold a demonstration on January 20 (ref C). The government continued to hold ten political and civil society leaders in custody arrested on January 19 to prevent the rally. Although the Maoists lifted the blockade, they continued their violent actions: a Maoist bomb killed two civilians on a road in the east on March 20, and separately, Maoists ambushed and killed 13 RNA soldiers who were repairing a Maoist damaged water line in Kavre District, just outside the Kathmandu Valley. End Summary.

Maoists, Parties Sign Parallel Statements

[1](#)2. (U) On March 19, following talks between the Parties and Maoists in New Delhi, and discussions among the seven-party alliance in Kathmandu, leaders of the seven-party alliance and the Maoists signed separate but identical documents reiterating their commitment to November 2005's 12-point understanding, which they cited as a roadmap to democracy, peace, and prosperity. Both sides stated they would continue

dialogue regarding the process of holding a constituent assembly, as the Maoists were demanding a national political convention, while the Parties were pushing for a constituent assembly instituted through reinstatement of Parliament.

Insurgents Call Off Strike

¶3. (U) As a result of the signing, the Maoists lifted their transportation strike and blockade of Kathmandu and district headquarters that had begun on March 14. The rebels also withdrew their threat of an indefinite nationwide strike, which was to begin April 3. In return, the Parties extended their demonstration planned for April 8 (the date democracy arrived in Nepal in 1990) to incorporate the Maoists' key date of April 6 (when mass protests began in 1990). The Maoists said they would support the seven-party alliance's announced four-day general strike, April 6-9, with a mass demonstration in Kathmandu on April 8. In a March 19 statement, Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai declared that, "we would like to inform that all our protest programs have been withdrawn from March 20, taking into consideration the preparation for general strikes, non-cooperation movement, and rallies called by the seven-party alliance."

Parties Hold Their Ground

¶4. (C) In separate meetings on March 18, GP Koirala, NC, and Sher Bahadur Deuba, NC(D), assured the Charge that the parties would not sign a joint statement with the Maoists. They retained their distrust of the Maoists, but still sought to bring the insurgents back into the political mainstream.

Following the parallel signing on March 19, Deuba told the press that the reiteration of the 12-point understanding was needed to avoid spreading unnecessary rumors. Explaining that the alliance agreed to uphold the understanding and intensify the peaceful people's movement toward democracy, he stated "next month's people's movement will be crucial for the future of the party and the country, and for restoration of democracy." Similarly, Amrit Bohara, Acting General Secretary of UML, (MK Nepal remained under house arrest),

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explained that "there was confusion about the future of the understanding, but now it is over." Arjun Narsingh KC, NC Central Committee Member, noted that the 12-point understanding had given "momentum" to the movement against the King's autocratic rule.

¶5. (C) Although frustrated with the King and his lack of action in reaching out to the political parties, both Deuba and Koirala were dismayed by the terms of the draft agreement the party representatives had negotiated with the Maoists in New Delhi. Koirala stressed that Krishna Sitoula, the NC representative, had exceeded his mandate. The NC leader emphasized that he was trying to keep the seven-party alliance united and convince the Maoists to rejoin the political mainstream. However, he commented that the draft joint statement was "rubbish," adding that the Maoists still had guns. Deuba told the Charge that Koirala had come under considerable pressure from elements of his own party, and others in the seven-party alliance, to agree to a joint statement with the Maoists (something the Indian ambassador, who met with Koirala the same day, confirmed) but was gratified he had held firm.

Planning for April 8

¶6. (C) Admitting to Emboff that it was confusing to see how the parties could bus people to the capital to participate in a mass rally if there was a nationwide strike, Minendra Rizal NC (D), explained that the parties would meet in the coming days to clarify protest plans leading to April 8. Rizal was one of many people who speculated that the government would

act against the April 8 planned Party rally as it had on January 19 by arresting party cadre and calling a daytime curfew.

Government Response Muted

¶7. (U) On March 17, terming a possible alliance between the seven-parties and the Maoists a "heinous criQ," Minister of State for Home Affairs Kamal Thapa promised strong government action against the "criminals." (Note: Thapa took a similarly tough line in a March 20 private conversation with the Charge. (Septel) End note.) However, as the parties and the Maoists did not announce a new alliance, and only reiterated their "understanding," the government was less harshly critical in March 20 public statements. On March 20, the government sponsored English language daily paper, The Rising Nepal, quoted Minister of State for Information and Communication, Shrish SJB Rana, as saying, "it is unfortunate that the political parties are focused on the Delhi talks even when His Majesty the King has called on those who have strayed to work for nation building." He noted that the parties were "displaying the mentality of giving shelter to terrorism in the country by talking of collaboration with the terrorists."

Government Still Detaining Ten

¶8. (U) As of March 20, the government was still detaining ten civil society and political activists taken into preemptive custody in January under the Public Security Act (PSA). The government released an eleventh detainee, Prem Suwal, a leader of the Nepal Workers and Peasants' Party, on March 19, following a Supreme Court order. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that the government was detaining nine people in Kathmandu and one person, Mahadav Gurung, in Pokhara. OHCHR Country

Representative Ian Martin personally met with all Kathmandu detainees on March 18, including civil rights activists Dr. Devendra Raj Panday, Mathura Prasad Shrestha, and Krishna Pahadi (Panday and Pahadi head the Civil Society Movement for Peace And Democracy); editor of pro-left monthly Mulyankan Shyam Shrestha; Hridayesh Tripathi, NSP (Ananda-Devi); Narhari Avharya, NC; Gopal Man Shrestha, Acting NC(D) President on January 19 wQn Deuba was still in detention under the RCCC corruption charges; and Ram Chandra Poudel, NC. The government also held CPN-UML General Secretary MK Nepal under house arrest.

Maoist Violence Continues

¶9. (U) Despite the withdrawal of their transportation blockade, Maoist violence throughout the country continued. On March 20, a Maoist bomb put on the road to enforce the blockade exploded in the eastern district of Morang and killed a rickshaw driver and a bicyclist. On March 19, the day before the Maoists lifted their blockade, Maoists burned three vehicles - two milk tankers in central Tahahu District, and a passenger bus in Eastern Morang District. Maoists also fired several shots at a bus full of patients who had undergone eye treatment near the eastern terai city of Rajbiraj. Though the bus was damaged, no one in the bus was hurt. In the eastern city of Inaruwa on March 19, Maoists released a policeman and his wife whom they had abducted on March 16. The Maoists kept the motorcycle and cellphone seized from the couple.

¶10. (C) The Maoists continue to target and threaten development infrastructure. On March 20, Maoists ambushed security forces in Kavre District, west of Kathmandu. The Directorate of Public Relations of the Royal Nepalese Army stated that security forces were trying to restore a water supply to a town blocked by Maoists when the Maoists attacked. The Maoists killed 13 RNA soldiers and injured more. The government reportedly killed at least one Maoist

in the clash. Also on March 19, Maoists cut off the electricity supply to Dailekh District by damaging the grid in the far-west Surkhet District. Rebels prevented workers from the District Electricity Authority from repairing the damage.

Comment

¶11. (C) During our discussions with NC and NC (D) leaders on March 18, it was clear that the Parties understood the importance of standing firm and not signing a joint statement with the Maoists as long as the Maoists refused to give up violence. The resulting parallel statements were a face-saving mechanism to make it appear the talks in Delhi had achieved something while also giving the Maoists a reason to call off the blockade, which was causing increasing public antipathy against the insurgents.
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